

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ESTIMATED UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES PROVIDE BLEAK
CHRISTMAS STATISTICS

REF: LONDON 17211

1. ESTIMATED UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES RELEASED YESTERDAY
(DECEMBER 21) BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT INDICATE
THAT ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE UK CONTINUED TO RISE
STEADILY OVER THE LAST TWO MONTHS TO DECEMBER 15. 1.33
MILLION ADULT WORKERS (SEASONABLY ADJUSTED) ARE UNEM-
PLOYED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, REPRESENTING 5.6 PERCENT OF
THE ADULT WORK FORCE, AND IS 24,000 MORE THAN TWO MONTHS
AGO (DETAILS BEING POUCHED).

2. THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIZED THAT ITS
CURRENT FIGURES ARE RETURNS OR ESTIMATES FROM ABOUT ONLY
HALF OF THE COUNTRY, SINCE IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO
COMPLETE THE NORMAL COUNT FOR THE SECOND MONTH IN
SUCCESSION OWING TO AN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE IN THE DEPART-
MENT OF EMPLOYMENT. NONETHELESS, THESE FIGURES SHOW THAT
UNEMPLOYMENT THIS CHRISTMAS IS THE HIGHEST SINCE THE WAR.
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SINCE DECEMBER 1975, UNEMPLOYMENT HAS RISEN BY 155,000
FROM 5.0 TO 5.6 PERCENT. THE INCREASE IN SEASONABLY AD-
JUSTED ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT OF ABOUT 12,000 A MONTH SINCE
OCTOBER IS IN CONTRAST TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES
RELEASED OCTOBER 26 WHICH SHOW A SUBSTANTIAL DECREASE IN
THE NUMBER OF WHOLLY UNEMPLOYED AND THE NUMBER OF UNEM-

PLOYED SCHOOL LEAVERS. THIS HAD LED TO THE HOPE BY SOME OBSERVERS THAT UNEMPLOYMENT MAY HAVE BEGUN LEVELLING OUT.

3. THE UNADJUSTED UNEMPLOYMENT TOTAL IN THE UK DID FALL BY 6,000 SINCE THE OCTOBER COUNT, BUT THIS IS DUE MAINLY TO THE DECLINE IN THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED SCHOOL LEAVERS BY 32,000 TO 51,000. WHILE ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF SCHOOL LEAVERS OUT OF WORK IN SUMMER HAVE FOUND JOBS, THE TOTAL IS 16,000 HIGHER THAN IT WAS A YEAR AGO.

4. CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, COMMENTING ON THE FIGURES YESTERDAY IN PARLIAMENT, ELABORATED ON SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING ACCURATE FORECASTS INCLUDING THE RISE IN THE WORK FORCE. HE CALLED THE LATEST ESTIMATES "VERY DISTURBING" BUT "NOT CATASTROPHIC." HE HAS SAID PERVIOUSLY THAT UNEMPLOYMENT IS LIKELY TO RISE IN THE COMING YEAR BUT THAT THE INCREASE IN 1977 WILL BE SMALLER THAN WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CASE WITHOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PACKAGE. NONETHELESS, THE CURRENT EMPLOYMENT ESTIMATE PROVIDES A BLEAK CHRISTMAS STATISTIC INDEED.

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